

RDS Full IWG Call | Thursday, February 26, 2015

Key Points for Discussion

We have not replied to all of the comments. When we reply, we either make a change to the standard, or to make an explanation when we haven't been able to change.

We sent some points of feedback to Control Union to make sure some of the changes are feasible.

European Legislation

There were a fair amount of comments requesting that we make all certified organizations to comply with European Legislation.

Reply: "We strive as much as possible to respect the regional differences in terms of farming practices, environment, culture, and legislation. The RDS is a voluntary global standard that sets a baseline of best practices that gives brands confidence that a minimum set of best practices are being met. There are some instances where the RDS requirements are stronger than existing legislations. For example, the RDS includes a complete ban on all force feeding."

There would be some requirements that will be difficult to meet in Asia. We designed the standard to make local legislation a key element of the standard.

Usually what comes out of the European legislation is a baseline and the member countries add in their own requirements. There are many things that their legislation does not cover.

For waterfowl, legislation is not necessarily strong enough.

The intention is not to take one regional legislation and apply it globally.

Requirement Types

Some comments requested that all the requirements be CRITICAL MAJOR, and others along those lines.

Reply: "The challenge in creating a global standard is that farming practices vary greatly due to differences in environment, culture, and legislation. We do not expect to change all farming to a single set of practices, but rather we want to influence towards improved practices while eliminating cases of immediate harm to animals. We require compliance to local legislation to address the specific regional practices, while adding further requirements to move towards alignment on the treatment of animals."

The purpose of the standard is to ensure that down does not come from animals that have been subjected to 'any unnecessary harm, and to institute a traceability to system to validate the source of the material'. To this end, critical majors are designed to immediately address issues of harm to animals and lack of traceability. Majors relate to fundamental farm management practices that must be in place for a farm to meet the standard. Compliance to local legislation is a major. The 60 days compliance is

allowed as a means to encourage positive change in the farming practices. Minors relate to general animal husbandry, giving farmers the opportunity to improve their practices, which can vary from one region to the next. Minors supplement local legislation.”

Changes to the Standard

F6.2 Nesting areas should be dark, weatherproof and dry – **Change to a minor.**

F7.8 A safe place, which is free of competition, should be provided for sick and/or injured animals to recover. – **Change to minor**

Training Records: Kept for five years. – **This will not apply for household or family run farms. The requirement for records on family is a bit too onerous.**

Is this based on number of employees, or structure? This could end up being a loophole if it isn't defined correctly.

Base on number of employees (maybe 5?); it would be reasonable to expect that 5 or less employees would be a less informal way.

If the cut off is five employees, they could still be using this to get around the requirements.

If it's a small group, there can be a shared understanding of the practices, there would be a strong relationship between the owner and the staff. This definition would only apply to record keeping.

Change to: “This does not apply to farms with less than 5 employees.”

F6.13 Waterfowl should have access to water for behavioral needs.

This is a lot to change. This is a very difficult point to enforce. So far in the audits by Control Union, they have seen very few facilities with water available to the ducks and geese. It would be too severe a change to impose the farming systems at this point.

In some countries, it is not allowed to have water because of fear of bird flu. We know that there are challenges on this point, which is why we didn't speak against making a recommendation.

Add to guidance: Make a recommendation to have weekly access to pools.

F6.15 A written plan for emergency situations (eg. fire, power or water cut off, flood, snow storm, feeding system breakdown, transport vehicle breakdown) should be available to care for the waterfowl.

We did not make a written plan mandatory because of restrictions of small farms.

We do not make a written plan mandatory because in some cases the farms are individually owned and run, so this type of documentation is not required.

Change to Minor: Change wording “An emergency plan shall be in place. This may be verified by a document check or an interview.”

Emergency weather situations should be covered by the emergency action plan.

Change to Minor from Recommendation.

F6.16 Temperature shall be controlled in the housing of hatchlings

Change to Major.

Add guidance: At day one, temperature should be at body temperature of hatchlings. After 20 days this should be adjusted to outside temperature during daytime.

Next Steps:

We will take these changes and adapt the current draft, and then present that to the RDS Steering Committee for final approval during a call in two weeks:

Thursday, March 12 at 8 AM Pacific, 10 AM Central, 11 AM Eastern, 3 PM UK, 4 PM Amsterdam

Down Stakeholder Meeting Update

Informal alignment around some key issues with down.

Identified no go areas: Live-plucking, force-feeding critical for animal welfare issues.

parallel production where animal were present was also identified as not allowed.

There is evidently parts of the supply chain, the standards diverge. This is equally true when it comes on alignment of the standards.

There are some standards where parallel production is allowed were animals are not present. There is a very clear alignment that blended products are not labeled at point of sale.

There was also a discussion on recycled down. European suppliers have noticed a critical move away from down and into synthetic alternatives. From a general sustainability viewpoint, this could be somewhat worrying. But from an animal welfare perspective, it is argued that this could be a good thing.

We are looking at something additional to the mountain challenge. We will use this additional tool to look at grouping industries and identifying where they are. We are talking to new outdoors brands, to bring additional brands on board. We will also put a bit of new about the multi-stakeholder initiative. We have been in touch with OIA, EOG and others. There is positive movement towards animal welfare in the outdoor industry, and we are encouraging similar action in other industries.

We are very pleased with the adoption of the standard; we currently have about 35 brands signed on to the standard. We now have our sights set on the bedding industry.

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK!